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# STATEMENT

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OF

R. MORRIS COPELAND,

Asst. Adjutant-General and Major of Volunteers,

DISCHARGED FROM SERVICE

AUGUST 6, 1862.


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## STATEMENT.

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HAVING suffered a grievous injustice which covers me with suspicion, and, in the judgment of many, with deep disgrace, I have eagerly hoped that some tardy justice would come to me; or at least that some opportunity would be vouchsafed by the executive officers of our Government to meet such accusations as may have been lodged against me, in order to confess their truth, or to triumphantly refute them.

In a war like ours, many persons must suffer; and, if it is for the general good, the sufferers must be content: but it is hard to understand how the general good can be advanced by driving an able, healthy, and willing officer from a post of honor and danger into absolute retirement.

I have waited patiently and impatiently for some statement of the charges against me, and have wearied every official to whom I have access by my urgent entreaties for his aid to induce the Government to listen to me.

The Governor and a Senator of Massachusetts, and many of the most esteemed citizens, have in vain repeatedly requested the President, and Secretary of War, to permit me to know explicitly and officially for what I was discharged the service.

Too much occupied to attend to all the cases of apparent injustice which might occur, the Government created a commission of officers of high rank to examine the cases of those who deem themselves aggrieved. I have humbly and earnestly

asked permission to have my case reviewed by that commission. This, too, is denied. The Government turns a deaf ear to every entreaty; and the commission confess that they have no power to examine my case, unless it is specially sent to them by the War Department: and thus I am now more than a year out of the service, without any definite knowledge of the charges against me. I have never been examined, or had an opportunity to say whether the charges which have been preferred against me are true or false.

Having been accused of the gravest fault, which, as stated in the words of my discharge, may mean treachery, cowardice, or theft, is it strange that I should exhaust every effort to know what is my accusation, and, if possible, to restore my reputation? My friends and family deserve that I should make every effort.

I have done so, and failed; and my only resort now is to tell my history as briefly as I can to those who care enough for me or for justice to listen, hoping that I may satisfy those who read this account that I have done my utmost to maintain and forward the Right; and that, if I have erred, it has never been in any manner which should subject me to the charge of having "violated an important trust."

When I recall the circumstances of my military life, which had been prosperous and honorable and commended up to the day my dismissal was published, and yet find myself, after a year, still waiting to know why I have been dismissed the service, it seems as if it must be an ugly dream.

The President, and Secretary of War, have each indirectly denied that the causes alleged by the other are the real reasons of my discharge, and both have referred me to Gen. Banks as the person who brought the charges against me, and therefore the proper person to tell me what they are; to which Gen. Banks replies, that he has never made any charges against me.

In such confusion, when those who have dismissed me, and who hold supreme power, seem specially pledged to withhold

redress, it is useless to hope for any other justification than that which may be found in my military life, the circumstances of which I will narrate as briefly as I can; and, as I have to prove a case where I am ignorant of the charges, I must be excused if I introduce some letters and facts which are not pertinent to my discharge alone, but which serve to establish the character which I held amongst my companions, equals and superiors, as a man of honor and ability.

Immediately following the call of the President for seventy-five thousand volunteers, the Secretary of War authorized the raising in Massachusetts of certain regiments for three years or the war.

The Second Massachusetts Regiment was raised under that permission, and was the first of the three-years' regiments organized in the country. On the 22d of April, I was appointed quarter-master of the regiment, and did my utmost to make my department worthy of the regiment; remaining with it through Patterson's campaign, and until Aug. 8, 1861, when I was appointed aide-de-camp to Major-Gen. Banks.

On accepting my resignation as quarter-master, Col. Gordon wrote me the following letter:—

MARYLAND HEIGHTS, CAMP SECOND MASS. REGT.,  
Opposite Harper's Ferry, Aug. 8, 1861.

DEAR SIR,—I have received your letter enclosing the transmission of your resignation as quarter-master of this regiment, to take a higher rank upon the staff of Major-Gen. Banks, commanding corps at this station.

I have neither right or desire to stand in the way of your promotion; and in accepting, so far as my authority goes, your resignation, I wish to bear this testimony to your entire faithfulness in the position of regimental quarter-master; to express my satisfaction perfect and entire with you in the discharge of your daily duties, and my regret that you cannot find your interests so well furthered with us as elsewhere.

I shall take immediate steps to fill your place; and, in bidding you God speed wherever you go, remain truly your friend,

GEO. H. GORDON, *Col. Second Mass. Regt.*

On the 15th August, the following general order was issued from headquarters:—

## GENERAL ORDER, No. 40.

First Lieut. J. L. Kirby Smith, Topographical Engineers ; first Lieut. R. M. Copeland, Second Mass. Regt. ; and second Lieut. O. G. Babcock, Corps of Engineers, — are hereby appointed aides-de-camp to the Major-General commanding.

They will be obeyed and respected accordingly.

By order of MAJOR-GEN. BANKS.

ROBT. WILLIAMS, *Assistant Adjutant-General.*

I remained with Major-Gen. Banks as aide-de-camp, and doing no especial duty, until, Lieuts. Smith and Babcock having been relieved, and Capt. Williams promoted, I was the only officer left on Gen. Banks's staff not in the quarter-master, commissary, or medical departments. By necessity of position, I became acting assistant adjutant-general, and did also the duty of aide-de-camp, until the 27th of November ; when I was regularly appointed assistant adjutant-general, with the rank of major, by the President.

During this interval, the army was stationed along the Potomac River, from Hancock to Great Falls, in Maryland, and partook of the disastrous affair at Edward's and Conrad's Ferries on the 22d of October.

Whilst the army was stationed at Frederick, Md., in the winter of 1861, I was invited by Brigadier-Gen. Cooper to take command of a new Maryland regiment which he was empowered to raise. I agreed to do so upon the condition that I might select all the officers ; to which the following extract from a letter of Brigadier-Gen. Cooper, of Feb. 12, 1862, is an answer : —

“But what I intended to propose was, that when the Fifth Regiment is organized, which will be shortly commenced, I will give you such aid as I can in officering it to your liking, and by such men as you may indicate. It would be well, however, that a part of the field-officers should be Marylanders, and also a fair proportion of the company-officers.”

I afterwards declined this regiment, from a necessity having arisen for taking a field-officer who would have been incompetent.



In February, the army moved into Virginia, and followed Gen. Jackson up the Valley of the Shenandoah. During the campaign, I was a participant in four skirmishes, and in the severe battle of Winchester, when Jackson returned to attack the force commanded by Brigadier-Gen. Shields; and was complimented, with other officers of Gen. Banks's staff, by Gen. Shields, in the following letter: —

WOODSTOCK, VA., April 16, 1862.

To Major R. MORRIS COPELAND, A.A.G., Depart. Shenandoah.

SIR, — In a number of the "Herald," whose exact date I now forget, I read the other day what purports to be my official report, which contains some material errors, or rather omits some important particulars.

The printed report in the "Herald" purports to be addressed to Gen. Banks; when it was addressed to you officially, as assistant adjutant-general.

In speaking of Gen. Banks's staff, the published report goes on to say "that the officers of his (Banks's) staff having remained behind, intending to leave for Centreville in the afternoon;" but omitted the following, which will be found in the official report: —

"These officers afterwards participated in the battle; and my whole command, as well as myself, are highly indebted to them for valuable services."

The tribute which was so justly earned the "Herald" omits. The omission is something which I deeply regret. I knew nothing of its publication until I accidentally fell upon a number of the paper the other day, or I would have corrected it at once.

Respectfully, your obedt. servt.,

(Signed)

JAS. SHIELDS,

Brigadier-General, Commanding Division Department Shenandoah.

Early in April, the First Regiment of Vermont Cavalry, under command of Col. J. P. Holliday, was ordered to join Gen. Banks. On its march, the colonel committed suicide.

At the request of some of the officers, who addressed a letter to Gov. Holbrook, requesting that I might be appointed to the command of the regiment, I applied to the Governor for the appointment, enclosing letters of recommendation from Gens. Banks, Shields, Williams, and others, which will be found in the subjoined Appendix, A.

Capt. Tompkins, of the cavalry of the regular army, was finally appointed to the First Vermont Cavalry; the Governor

hoping that an officer whose special education had been in that arm would be peculiarly competent to make the regiment a success.

I regretted my disappointment, whilst I could not but commend the selection of Capt. Tompkins; and turned my inquiries into other directions: for I was fully determined to exchange the wearisome, routine duties of the office for field-service.

At the outbreak of the war, I had been fully convinced that the best hope of success lay in enlisting the black Americans in our armies, and frequently advocated it. Besides their value as soldiers, the history of past times seemed to teach, that men in no way are better fitted for freedom than by fighting for it; and I believed that the slaves, organized under the command of white officers whom they could respect, would become a people whom we could gladly call Americans.

My army experience confirmed previous theories; and I often discussed the probability of inducing the Government to allow me to raise some colored troops. On the 7th of May, I finally decided to write to the Secretary of War, asking his permission to raise a colored regiment.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT SHENANDOAH,  
NEW MARKET, VA., May 7, 1862.

To Hon. E. M. STANTON, Sec. of War.

SIR, — There is a rumor that Gen. Hunter, through Gen. Saxton, is to arm a considerable number of negroes, and form them into regiments. If this is to be done, allow me to ask permission of the Government to raise a regiment of colored men at such places in the United States as may be best adapted to that purpose. I will undertake to have a regiment of first-rate material ready for service in three weeks after permission is granted me.

I have the honor to be yours very respectfully,

R. MORRIS COPELAND,

*A. A. G., and Major of Vols.*

I received no answer to my application; and, after waiting a suitable time, I proposed to some of my friends to join with me in a personal application at Washington. The following-named officers consented to join — Capt. James Savage, Second Massachusetts Volunteers, to be lieutenant-colonel; and Lieut.



Robert G. Shaw, Second Massachusetts Volunteers, to be major — in the regiment, if I could get the needed authority.

I proposed the plan to Gen. Banks, who, with characteristic caution, neither approved nor objected to it, but gave Lieut. Shaw and myself leave of absence to go to Washington to bring the matter personally before the Government.

In addition to our leave of absence, Gen. Banks gave me a letter of introduction to Mr. Stanton, in which, without indorsing or approving the plan, he commended me to him, and said that there was no officer of his acquaintance better fitted to successfully carry out the plan I had to propose than myself.

As I am now approaching that portion of my narrative for which, if for any thing, I have incurred the displeasure of the Government, I must return a little, and recall the posture of affairs in the Valley of the Shenandoah.

On the 20th of March, Gen. Banks was ordered to send his troops to Manassas, and report in person at Washington; and, obedient to the order, the 22d of March found Winchester garrisoned by about nine thousand men of all arms, under command of Gen. Shields. Gen. Banks had started for Washington, leaving his staff to cross the country to Washington in the rear of the troops.

Gen. Jackson had been informed of our movements; and, believing Gen. Shields weaker than he was, attacked our forces, and was repulsed. On receiving news of the attack, Gen. Banks immediately returned to Winchester, recalled his troops, and set out in pursuit of Jackson, who slowly retreated up the valley, and finally made good his escape into the Blue Ridge, where he was re-enforced by Gen. Ewell and twelve thousand men. But, even now, we were in larger force than Jackson, and could alone have made a good attack upon him; and, if successful, could have turned his flank, seized the railroad and Gordonsville, and have pushed on for Richmond. This movement could have been rendered certain by the active co-operation of Gen. Frémont, whose advanced guard was within two days' march of Jackson's rear at Staunton; and, once at

Staunton, Jackson must have fallen back before our combined armies, or have been routed.

Such a promising movement was appreciated by all parties, and plans arranged for carrying it into effect. The days for the movements of the different armies were arranged, and we felt sure that the ripe fruit was about to be gathered; when a peremptory order was sent from Washington to Frémont to remain where he was, and to Banks to send Shields and ten thousand men to Fredericksburg, and to fall back with the remainder of his force — about six thousand men — to Strasburg.

Such a movement as this seemed suicidal. Once before, Jackson, with a small army, had seized a similar opportunity, and, though foiled at Winchester, was beaten only by disparity of troops, and the fact that his men were worn out by long marches; but now we should have about six thousand men to oppose to fifteen thousand, who could take their time to attack us.

We retreated to Strasburg, and took up a position which gave the enemy the possession of a mountain range which reached to headquarters, from which they could almost count our men.

I urged Gen. Banks, before Shields left us, not to content himself with despatches to Washington, but to send some confidential and competent person thither, who might show the Government what would be likely to follow the execution of the orders received.

Very reluctantly, Gen. Banks at last consented to send me; and I had got some distance on my way to Washington, when I was recalled by a telegram; the general having finally decided to obey the orders as they were, and let the Government be responsible for the consequences.

Our position at Strasburg was peculiarly weak, our left being at Front Royal, separated from the centre and right by the Peaked Mountain Range, which was in possession of the enemy;

and it was obvious, that, unless strongly and quickly re-enforced, we were likely to be annihilated.

It was at this juncture that Lieut. Shaw and myself set out for Washington. As soon as possible after arrival, I laid my plan before the Massachusetts delegation in Congress, who nearly all discouraged the plan, commending the idea, but deciding that nothing could be successfully done about it.

I determined to carry it forward as far as possible, and sought an interview with Mr. Stanton, presenting Gen. Banks's letter of introduction. Before I could enter at all into details, he cut me short, saying that it was useless to waste time talking about any such plan ; for the President was in such a state of mind, that he could do nothing with him. He then asked me about Gen. Banks's position and prospects. I told him briefly how important it was that the general should be re-enforced, and showed him on the map the exceeding weakness of our position. Mr. Stanton appeared annoyed by my statement, and said that three generals (Banks, Frémont, M'Dowell) all thought Jackson was in front of them, and all wanted troops ; and he did not believe Jackson was at all to be dreaded. There being nothing more to be said, I left him.

The day before, I had seen many of Gen. Banks's friends, who were greatly puzzled at our movement, and could not understand why he, who was a week before victorious at Harrisonburg, should now be seeking safety behind earthworks at Strasburg. Not wishing to compromise any one, I telegraphed to Gen. Banks that much speculation and inquiry was afloat, and asked instructions whether to communicate what I knew about the campaign and Gen. Frémont's intended participation, or not. In reply, I received the following telegram : —

STRASBURG, VA., May 19, 1862.

To Major R. MORRIS COPELAND, Washington, D.C.

Your despatch is received. Gen. Banks desires me to say that you can state what you know of despatches to Frémont, &c., to Gooch and friends.

F. DE HAUTEVILLE, *Capt., and A. D. C.*

Authorized by this permission, I explained from time to time, to those who I thought had a right to know, the facts of our campaign; and predicted immediate disaster, unless we were strongly re-enforced. After my interview with the Secretary of War, I telegraphed as follows : —

WASHINGTON, D.C., May 21, 1862.

To Major-Gen. BANKS, Strasburg, Va.

The Secretary of War asked if you needed more troops. I represented case strongly.

R. MORRIS COPELAND,

*Major, and A. A. G.*

Later in the same day, I again telegraphed to him : —

WASHINGTON, May 21, 1862; eleven, A.M.

To Major-Gen. BANKS, Strasburg, Va.

Do you want any thing said about Cooper's brigade?

R. MORRIS COPELAND, *Major, and A. A. G.*

The Secretary had told me that there were no troops to send Gen. Banks; whilst I knew that Gen. Cooper and about five thousand men were in garrison at Baltimore, eager to go into the field. In the afternoon, in reply, I received the following despatch : —

STRASBURG, VA., May 21, 1862; two, P.M.

To Major R. MORRIS COPELAND,

Sanitary Rooms, Washington, D.C.

*Say to the Secretary of War, we greatly need increased forces. . . .* Frémont telegraphs that Jackson has returned to the valley. This is confirmed by information from different sources. Jackson is about eight miles from Harrisonburg; Ewell still at Swift-run Gap.

N. P. BANKS, *M. G. C.*

I received this last despatch too late to go to the Secretary in office-hours; and, the case being urgent, determined to try to see him at his house. To give more weight to my statements, I asked Mr. D. W. Gooch, representative from Massachusetts, to go with me. He consented; but we found Mr. Stanton out. Later in the evening, I found him at Mr. Hooper's, representative from Massachusetts, at dinner.

At Mr. Hooper's request, Mr. Stanton saw me, and seemed much irritated that Gen. Banks should have telegraphed me instead of him; and again repeated that there could be no danger, and he could send no troops, as he had none to send. I



mentioned Gen. Cooper and his men at Baltimore. He answered, that Gen. Dix, at Baltimore, was a major-general in command of a department, and that he demanded to have troops. I objected, that, however much Gen. Dix might *like* to have troops, Gen. Banks *must* have them, or be ruined; for that, if he were not re-enforced in three days, he would be driven out of the valley. This was Tuesday night. The next Sunday, Gen. Banks was in the most rapid flight.

He at length consented to send Gen. Cooper's brigade. I asked him, should I go to Baltimore by the morning train, to give Gen. Cooper notice, and to ascertain the character of the force? and he directed me to do so.

Previous to seeing Mr. Stanton, I had sent the following telegram to Gen. Banks:—

WASHINGTON, May 21, 1862; five, P.M.

To Major-Gen. BANKS, Strasburg, Va.

Your despatch received too late to see any one to-day, though made effort. I will see some friends this evening. I urged the matter strongly this morning.

R. MORRIS COPELAND,

*Major, and A. A. G.*

After my interview with Mr. Stanton, I telegraphed again:—

WASHINGTON, May 21, 1862; ten, P.M.

To Major-Gen. BANKS, Strasburg, Va.

I have seen the Secretary at Mr. Hooper's. He seemed surprised that you were really in want of troops, and said there was not a man he could send; but, at last, said that he would order to-morrow Cooper's brigade to join you. It is that or none. He seemed to be expecting to hear from you.

R. MORRIS COPELAND,

*Major, and A. A. G.*

Later, I telegraphed that I should leave for Baltimore by the morning train, where he could address me, if he desired, at the Eutaw House. On arrival at Baltimore the next morning, I found the following despatch awaiting me:—

STRASBURG, VA., May 21, 1862; twelve, P.M.

To Major R. MORRIS COPELAND,

Eutaw House, Baltimore, Md.

Your despatch received. *Thanks for your promptness.* Have sent despatch to Secretary of War. Col. Clarke leaves for Washington to-day. *How soon can the troops arrive here?*

N. P. BANKS, *M. G. Commanding.*

I replied as follows : —

BALTIMORE, May 22, 1862.

To Major-Gen. BANKS, Strasburg, Va.

I have just returned from a tour of Gen. Cooper's command. If you can get it intact, you will be well satisfied. The One Hundred and Eleventh Pennsylvania Volunteers, nine hundred and fifty strong; Eighty-second Pennsylvania Volunteers, same. Men rather young, well disciplined, orderly. Camps neat, men respectful and earnest; good quality of men. Third Maryland Volunteers, good. Three regiments condensed. Field-officers very good. Reynold's Battery, six guns; very fine, and eager to go. Two squadrons of good cavalry. Total, three thousand eight hundred men, well armed and clad, with some field experience. You will like them. I have telegraphed to Gooch and Hooper to jog the memory of the Secretary. If you telegraph to him direct, it will aid. Gen. Dix opposed; and will prevent the reduction of his command, if possible.

R. MORRIS COPELAND, *A. A. G.*

Having previously received a fifteen-days' leave of absence to enable me to go to Massachusetts, I left Baltimore for Boston on the evening of the 22d, and arrived in Boston Friday afternoon.

I have been thus minute in detailing the correspondence between myself and Gen. Banks, to make plain the duty I performed whilst in Washington, and the authority under which I acted, and in order that the reader may decide how far I transcended the authority I received, and how far, from time to time, I can be accused of having "violated an important trust confided in me by the commander of the Department of the Shenandoah."

It will be remembered, that, on Tuesday night, I predicted to the Secretary of War, that, unless Gen. Banks were re-enforced within three days, he would be driven out of the valley. Saturday night, news came that Kenly was attacked at Front Royal; and, on Sunday, news was received in Boston by telegraph, and was published in the morning papers of Monday, that Banks had been attacked by Jackson in force, Kenly captured with his command at Front Royal, and that Banks was in rapid retreat on Winchester.



Thus my worst apprehensions were realized. Knowing so intimately the condition and position of our command, I was deeply grieved and excited. Early Monday morning, I went to the house of his Excellency Gov. Andrew to get the latest news. He showed me a large number of the most alarming telegrams received from Washington, representing the matter quite as bad as it really was. In the course of our interview, he expressed his solicitude lest the over-taxed militia of Massachusetts might respond tardily to the call for immediate volunteers; and asked me if I could not write some appeal to the people of Massachusetts, which would arouse them to their utmost efforts.

Eager only to forward the war, and hasten support to our shattered army, I sat down there, and wrote the following appeal to the people of Massachusetts, which was sent at once to the daily evening press; and before I could revise, examine, or recall it, was spread over New England, and copied the next day into most of the Northern newspapers:—

#### AN APPEAL TO MASSACHUSETTS.

BOSTON, MASS, May 26, 1862.

*To the Men of Massachusetts:—*

Have you heard the news? Have you heard that a Massachusetts general, and the sons of Massachusetts, the brave Second Regiment, have been driven out of Virginia by an enemy that only ten days ago was nearly prostrate before us?

You have dreamed that this war was drawing speedily to a close; that we were conquering and possessing this country. You have seen the enemy falling back before us at all points. For three months, Gen. Banks has been working, at every disadvantage, to reclaim to us the lovely Valley of Virginia; to strengthen those who are for us, and to subdue and govern our enemies. Three weeks ago to-day, he was, with sixteen thousand men, at Harrisonburg, a hundred miles from his present position, holding twenty thousand of the enemy at bay, ready in one day more to move suddenly on their flank, and crush them. Frémont was ready to occupy Staunton, whence fifty thousand men would have rushed victorious upon Richmond. The day for the movement to commence our death-knell was sounded. Ten thousand men were ordered from him for Gen. M'Dowell to protect Washington; and Banks, with six thousand, sent back fifty miles to Strasburg,—a little handful of men to face twenty thousand. Slowly we fell back, and

most reluctantly, disputing the road with the enemy, conscious of the great emergency, but ready to die to protect the people who had learned to trust in us; with the enormous duty of protecting a railroad seventy miles long between Strasburg and Manassas, and the great Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.

Cumbered with the sick and baggage of the ten thousand ordered away; with a train of wagons seven miles long, which had been necessary for us, who were on no lines of railroad, or no navigable rivers, to furnish our supplies, — we have slowly yielded to the force of circumstances. I was sent to Washington and Baltimore to ask for aid, meagrely and tardily granted, because our troops are nearly all in the field; and this morning we have the sad knowledge, that this three months of labor, of the extent of which you cannot conceive, is undone; that, humiliated, sorrowful, but courageous and earnest still, we have been compelled to return to Maryland, to leave traitorous men and stony-hearted women exultant over the sad sight. They have seen, as they hoped, the backs of the Yankees.

Do you wonder, that, under all these disadvantages, Major-Gen. Banks, with his handful of six thousand men, has had to retreat before twenty-five thousand of the enemy?

Is it strange that he is driven back? What could have been expected? Thank God, the disaster is no worse! Thank God that your Second Regiment is still left to fight for the flag! But, for God's sake, realize the position. When our army marches victorious through an enemy's country, they go like Christian warriors, seeking to relieve the wounded enemies they meet, to restore confidence to the trembling women and children in the towns and hamlets and scattered farm-houses, rebuilding bridges, and restoring to the people the comforts and security of civilized life.

The enemy follow our trail like hell-hounds. At Ball's Bluff, they shot prisoners in cold blood. At Bull Run, they cut the heads off dead men, — here shooting from behind fences, bayoneting the sick and wounded by the wayside, and making it their boast that they have killed a Yankee. An unscrupulous enemy, that will lose no opportunity for treachery and outrage.

They will cross the Potomac River, exultant, and reckless of all consequences: for their cause is deperate; and, knowing that they must ultimately fail, they burn to wreak on our friends the outrages they have so falsely and inhumanly attributed to us.

Men of Massachusetts! forget your trades and business, which will be of no value if this enemy is not destroyed. The hands that hold the pen, the ruler, and the hammer, were made in these days for better things. Seize the musket and sabre, and respond to the cry of the wounded and dying who are in the enemy's bloody hands.

Come to rescue Gen. Banks and the Second Massachusetts Regiment, — one of the noblest and most earnest you have sent out.

I speak to you with fervor, because I have been in the enemy's country nearly a year. I have helped to subdue and to relieve. I know the fiendishness of our foe. I have seen how noble have been your efforts, and how eagerly you have responded to the former calls for troops. Once more, let me urge you to rally quickly for the honor of the State, for the lives of those you love. A blow struck quickly and surely now will retrieve all loss. Every man who goes at once is better than two when the necessity is past. Let me carry back to the suffering troops the assurance that you are coming in your might.

R. MORRIS COPELAND,

*Asst. Adj.-Gen. to Major-Gen. Banks.*

When I read my appeal in print, I saw that I had made a mistake ; for, whilst it could not be called any violation of the Army Regulations, it was likely to irritate the Secretary of War, who, having taken upon himself the responsibility of all movements, was, of course, held accountable for their success or failure. I also feared that it would annoy Gen. Banks, who had studiously avoided every thing which looked like a complaint against the Government, — even to the extent of obeying the orders, without suitable remonstrance, which had caused these disasters. But it did not then, nor does it now, seem to me that I could be said to censure my superior officers, any more than that any person who simply narrates historical facts can be said to censure those whose actions make history. My apprehensions proved too true in the case of both Banks and Stanton.

Although in no wise responsible for what I had done, Gen. Banks feared that my letter might involve him with the Administration, and interrupt the friendly relations then existing ; and accordingly sent me the following despatch : —

WILLIAMSBURG, MD., June 2, 1862.

To Mr. C. F. DUNBAR, Boston, Mass.

Major Copeland should secure some position in the Massachusetts regiments of equal rank to that he now holds. It is not consistent that he should return to his post here after his proclamation at Boston. Please, convey to him this information.

N. P. BANKS, *M. G. C.*

This telegram was not received until after I had left for camp, and was forwarded to me there ; but, by some delay of the mails, it did not arrive for two weeks.

Immediately on arrival at headquarters, I reported my actions to Gen. Banks, explaining my motives and the circumstances; and expressed my regret if I had acted in any way to compromise him. I told him that I had been thanked by many of his personal friends, who believed that my letter had been of great service to him, as it served to remove the blame for his disaster from him, where the public would naturally place it, to the Government, where it belonged.

The general appreciated the service, but, not wishing to share its responsibility, told me that he thought, under the circumstances, I had best seek a transfer to some other command.

I replied, that I had long wanted to change into some more active service, and only regretted that my efforts to do him and the country a service should be the immediate cause for renewed efforts to find some other field of duty.

At the time of this interview, I did not know that the general had said any thing about my letter to others; but I soon learned, that, when he read it, he pointed out the passage in which I said I had been sent for troops to several officers, *and denied that he had given me any authority.*

A reference to the telegrams I have recited above will show, in the passages marked in Italics, what are the facts.

I showed these telegrams to the officers to whom Gen. Banks had denied my authority, and left them to draw their own conclusions.

Under these circumstances, my position grew daily more disagreeable; and I lost no opportunity which promised me an agreeable change. I applied by letter to the War Department, asking to be transferred to the Department of the South; and, at the same time, to Gov. Andrew, for service in the Massachusetts quota.

Hearing nothing from Washington, and fearing that there might be prejudice against me at the War Department, I requested Major D. D. Perkins, chief of staff to Gen. Banks, who was about going to Washington on business, to apply per-



sonally for my exchange, and to press the matter so far as he could. After Major Perkins's return, on June the 20th, he told me very unwillingly the result of his interview in my behalf. He applied to the Secretary of War in the presence of several officers. On mention of my name and desire, Mr. Stanton denounced me with great severity; expressed his extreme surprise that Gen. Banks should retain so mischievous a person on his staff; and declared, that, unless Gen. Banks should remove me, he would discharge me from the service; and, turning to an officer of the Adjutant General's Department then present, directed him to then make out my discharge from the service of the United States.

Major Perkins represented to Mr. Stanton that it would be an injustice to Gen. Banks to thus summarily deprive him of a staff-officer, who must of necessity be important to the commanding-general; and suggested withholding my dismissal until I could be regularly relieved. For this or other reasons, Mr. Stanton changed his order; significantly remarking, that, if I came into his hands, I should have cause to remember him all my life.

Although I was prepared for misjudgment by Mr. Stanton, I was surprised that he should be so very angry with me; and it was not until I was afterwards told by Hon. Charles Sumner that Mr. Stanton had been assured that I wrote, or caused to be written, two severe editorial attacks upon him in the Boston daily papers, which appeared soon after my appeal, that I could account for his desire for personal revenge.

Unwilling to give up at this rebuff, I requested Gen. Banks, who went to Washington about June 15, to renew my application; which he promised to do. Gen. Banks returned about the 18th, and was in camp several days before I had an opportunity to ask the success of his effort. He told me that he had been unsuccessful, and that my only hope of change was a regimental commission. I asked him to tell me what the secretary said. He declined to do so, on the score of hurting my feelings; and, though urged, would say nothing more than

that the secretary told him that I deserved the severest punishment in his power to inflict, and that I need make no farther application for favors.

On or about the 27th June, the Department of the Shenandoah having been previously merged in the Department of Virginia, Gen. Banks went to Washington to meet Gen. Pope; and I again asked him to try to pacify Mr. Stanton, and to assure him that I had been in some way misrepresented to him, and to once more urge him to assign me to Gen. Hunter.

During this interval, I had made an unsuccessful effort to obtain the command of a Maryland regiment of cavalry, as will appear in the letter in Appendix B; but the regular army again was my stumbling-block, Gov. Bradford deciding to give the command of the regiment to an officer of that service.

On the 2d of July, Gen. Banks telegraphed to me:—

To Major COPELAND.

There is nothing to communicate upon affairs South. Have received your despatches. The secretary will assign you to Gen. Hunter. Put our force into condition to move as soon as possible. Will send you word when I return; think, to-morrow.

N. P. BANKS, M.G.C.

I could not tell what arguments the general had used with Mr. Stanton, but was willing to believe that all was right; though the circumstances which have transpired since induce the belief that Mr. Stanton's apparent consent was only part of a plan which should remove from Gen. Banks the necessity of a personal action in the matter.

If, at that time, any such charge had been made against me as has since been made the cause of my removal, I could have demanded the proof upon the spot, and claimed an inquiry or court-martial; but, by leaving me unsuspecting until on my road to a new and strange command, I could be cut down, with no chance to defend myself.

It was during these last days of June, when Gen. Banks was in Washington, that Gen. M'Clellan was changing from the



Chickahominy to the James River; and all thoughtful persons were full of anxiety for the fate of his army, which seemed to be the fate of the country.

On the 5th of July, Gen. Banks returned from Washington to camp, arriving about one, A.M. At breakfast, he told the assembled mess (some eight officers, with their servants attending upon them) of the disastrous rumors which were afloat in Washington as to M'Clellan's movements, and the danger there was of the capture of his whole command. He said further, that the President was believed to be much alarmed, and uncertain what to do; and that the feeling generally prevailed in Washington, that some one military chief should be placed in charge of the War Department and the armies in the field, thereby increasing the confidence of the army in the War Department, which would restore greater enthusiasm and efficiency in the entire service.

During my visit at the North, I had heard this idea frequently discussed, and I knew that a large party in the country were becoming apathetic, because they deemed the cause nearly ruined by the mismanagement and cross-purposes that prevailed between the War Department and the armies.

I had hoped, with many others, that some man could be appointed general-in-chief, who would not only harmonize the War Department and armies, but who would recognize how valuable an accession to our cause would be found in an army of colored men. The regular-army officers and too many of the volunteers sneered at the idea of a negro's making a good soldier; but I believed he would, and, when in Boston, had tried to persuade, amongst others, my brother-in-law, Mr. C. F. Dunbar, to advocate in his paper (the Boston Advertiser) the adoption of a policy by our Government which would call the negroes to our aid, and the appointment of some man as general-in-chief who would carry out such ideas.

Gen. M'Clellan's extreme insecurity of position, and the obvious necessity of a fresh and thorough effort on the part of the North to raise men, re-awakened my hope that the conserva-

tive party and such papers as the Boston Advertiser would at last urge that policy which has since proved so beneficial.

Gen. Banks's breakfast-talk stimulated anew my earnest desire to arouse men from their lethargy; and I determined to make one more effort with Mr. Dunbar to use his position and the influence of the paper to forward measures which seemed, in the nature of things, sure of success. The crisis in our affairs was so imminent, that I hoped the Government would at last abandon the conservatism which seemed to be strangling our cause, and advocate true progress. For these reasons, I decided to telegraph to Mr. Dunbar, as briefly as I could, a synopsis of the position, and what I believed would be our safety, sure that such a telegram would recall our previous conversations. During the morning I wrote a telegram, which I shall give below. After writing the despatch, I did not send it, as it occurred to me that Gen. Banks would not wish the influence of his remarks on my mind to be conveyed to others.

During the morning, however, the breakfast-talk was much discussed in camp, and generally told to officers who chanced to come to headquarters on various errands; and at dinner, Gen. Banks being present, the breakfast-conversation was repeated *in extenso*; and, as there were several strange officers invited to dinner, I could no longer consider any thing which had been said as specially confidential, or of a character which I should refrain from communicating by letter or otherwise to discreet friends.

Communication by mail was notoriously tardy and uncertain, and the need for action immediate; and I again prepared my telegram: but, in order to conceal its purport from the hasty inspection of telegraph-operators, I enveloped it in a simple cipher of my own invention, arranged for the occasion, not very difficult to be interpreted upon careful study by one who would give time and patience to the task. I cannot give the exact words of the despatch, as I have no copy, and I have never been permitted to see the interpretation which it received

in the War Office ; but, as nearly as I could recall it within a few weeks of the time it was written, it was as follows :—

“ Gen. Banks returned. M'Clellan defeated, and liable to be captured. The President alarmed, and uncertain what to do. Urge that a strong man be placed at the head of affairs, and troops be sent rapidly forward from the West.”

My desire to induce Mr. Dunbar to advocate in his paper the ideas in which I deemed our safety lay was the only cause of my sending the despatch ; and, as I placed entire confidence in his discretion, I did not for a moment consider that I was doing any thing improper ; and I am unable still to see that I in any way either violated a confidence or any rules of military propriety. I was certainly at liberty to repeat the contents of the telegram to any friend, or to write it by letter : how, then, can sending it by telegraph become unpardonable ?

The whole matter passed from my mind, and never recurred to me until after my return to Boston later in July, when, in conversation with Mr. Dunbar, I remembered it, and asked him why he never mentioned in his letters that he received it. He said, because he never did receive it. It seemed rather strange that he had not received it : but I gave no farther thought to it ; and even after I saw my discharge, and until the President, in my interview with him, mentioned the despatch as intercepted by the War Department, it never occurred to me as a cause of official censure.

In order that the reader may understand my real crime, he will please recall Mr. Stanton's threat of the 1st of June. The despatch was sent about the 5th of July. I heard nothing from it until the President mentioned it about the 13th of August ; and, as will be seen in my conversation with him, when he referred to the despatch, he told me that he did not suppose that it was for that I was discharged, but for some other charges made by Gen. Banks, of which he had not been informed. But Mr. Stanton, in his conversation with Mr. Sumner of Aug. 13, distinctly said it was for the despatch ; adding, not for the military censure or criticism, but because a staff-officer had no right

to use a cipher in the transmission of his despatches. He dares not say that I used the public cipher, and that therein I violated a trust; for every staff-officer in the Adjutant-General's department of the army would refute him. Moreover, the President said, as will be seen, —

“You are the same man that sent a despatch to a Boston editor, telling him I was scared, McClellan was to be captured, and we were all going to ruin. You put it into some kind of a cipher you made up; but we've got some very cute fellows in the telegraph-office, and one of them worked it out, and sent it up to me to read.”

Observe that there is not a single point in all this upon which to found a charge of violation of trust, and that, if, contrary to the President, and according to Mr. Stanton, it is for this despatch I am discharged, that the punishment has been inflicted, not for what I really did write, but for what a “very cute fellow in the telegraph-office” chose to represent me as writing; and that I have been strictly denied the opportunity to examine the rendering, to see if it is correct. And it will be seen hereafter, that, according to Mr. Stanton's statement to Mr. Sumner, the sin of the telegram was not its contents, but the use of a cipher unknown to the War Department.

This despatch was in the hands of the department from July 5; but they gave me no notice: not a whisper was breathed, which could warn me of the danger I was in.

I remained with Gen. Banks, apparently in full possession of his confidence, until I was relieved, on the 11th of July, by the arrival of my successor, Major Pelouze; when, by General Order, No. 5, I was ordered to report to Gen. Hunter.

#### GENERAL ORDER, No. 5.

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF VIRGINIA, SECOND CORPS,  
NEAR WARRENTON, VA., July 17, 1862.

Major Louis H. Pelouze, aide-de-camp, having reported for duty, will relieve Major R. M. Copeland, assistant adjutant-general of volunteers, in the duties pertaining to the adjutant-general's department at these headquarters.

Major Copeland, on being relieved, will, in conformity with Special Order, No. 150, from War Department, A.G.O., dated July 2, 1862, repair to the headquarters, Department of the South, and report for duty to Major-Gen. Hunter.

By command of Major-Gen. N. P. BANKS.

D. D. PERKINS, *Major, and Chief of Staff.*

SPECIAL ORDER, No. 150 (Extract).

WAR DEPARTMENT, ADJUTANT-GENERAL'S OFFICE,  
WASHINGTON, July 2, 1862.

3. Major R. M. Copeland, Assistant Adjutant-General United-States Volunteers, will repair to the headquarters, Department of the South, and report to Major-Gen. Hunter for duty.

By order of the Secretary of War.

L. THOMAS, *Adjutant-General.*

On arrival in Washington, I obtained the following leave of absence : —

SPECIAL ORDER, No. 165.

WAR DEPARTMENT, ADJUTANT-GENERAL'S OFFICE,  
WASHINGTON, July 18, 1862.

3. Leave of absence for fifteen days is granted Major R. M. Copeland, A.A.G.

By order of the Secretary of War.

L. THOMAS, *Adjutant-General.*

Official.

E. D. TOWNSEND, *Assistant Adjutant-General.*

I went at once to Boston to remain during my furlough, and, whilst there, applied to Gov. Andrew for the command of one of the new Massachusetts regiments, accompanying the application with copies of the foregoing letters of recommendation, and, in addition, the following from Gen. Banks ; which, it will be observed, is dated July 17, 1862 : —

HEADQUARTERS 2D CORPS DE ARMÉE, NEAR WARRENTON, VA.,  
July 17, 1862.

To His Excellency Gov. ANDREW, Boston.

Permit me to commend to your favorable consideration Major Copeland, as an officer well qualified to raise and command one of the new regiments of volunteers.

He is an officer of energy and capacity ; and, without doubt, would so organize and discipline any force placed under his charge as to reflect



honor upon the State, and render efficient service to the cause of the country.

I commend his application to your favorable consideration, and remain,  
With much respect, your obedient servant,

N. P. BANKS, M.G.C.

To my application, Gov. Andrew replied, through his secretary, Lieut.-Col. Brown, date July 23, that there was then no vacancy, but that he would consider me the first opportunity; and that he entertained a high opinion of my energy, ability, and military capacity.

With this answer I was contented, and devoted myself to recruiting my strength preparatory to going to the unhealthy climate of the Department of the South.

In the Appendix will be found several letters of introduction and recommendation written for me by the officers of Gen. Banks's staff, with whom I had served for a year, and which serve to show the estimation in which I was held by those who had the best opportunity to judge of my character, ability, and actions.

It will be seen that the President said that I was discharged upon Gen. Banks's accusation; and also, as it will appear, I was referred to Gen. Banks by the Secretary of War. Gen. Banks has denied making any charges; and certainly no one, who saw his demeanor towards me during the last three weeks of our official connection, will say that he exhibited any doubt or distrust of me.

To the last moment, I continued in the full and uninterrupted exercise of the duties and privileges of my position; and Gen. Banks's treatment was even more markedly confidential than before. He very frequently visited me in my private tent; remaining for a long time in confidential conversation on our army, the war, the men who manage it, the condition and prospects of the country, our future relations and hopes. The peculiarly friendly and confidential manner with which he treated me was commonly observed by my associates, and not infrequently commented upon; and it was this kind of intimacy



which bound me to Gen. Banks, and enabled me to composedly endure many things which otherwise would have been unendurable.

Yet the President, and Secretary of War, have both said that Gen. Banks made the charges against me; and have referred me to him as the source of explanation, if not for redress. I will now submit the following letter from Capt. F. d'Hauteville, aide-de-camp to Gen. Banks:—

HEADQUARTERS, DEPARTMENT OF THE GULF,  
NEW ORLEANS, Jan. 29, 1863.

To Major R. MORRIS COPELAND.

DEAR COPELAND,—I have just been able to speak for the first time to the general in regard to your own affairs. He entirely disclaims ever having written or spoken to the Secretary of War, or to any one connected with the Department, any thing hostile to yourself. He received a telegram from the War Department after you had left, demanding an immediate explanation of a telegram which you had sent. The general replied, that he did not know what was referred to; but that, if a copy of the telegram were sent to him, he thought he might be able to give a satisfactory explanation. A copy of the telegram was afterwards sent; and the general merely replied, that he knew nothing about it. I fully believe that you wrongfully suspect him of having been in any way instrumental in your dismissal.

Very truly yours,

F. D'HAUTEVILLE.

As my furlough drew near its end, I went to New York to prepare for my departure. A steamer was to leave for Port Royal the morning of my arrival, too late for me to take passage in her; and I was thus fortunately compelled to wait a little more than a week. Had I sailed on the 3d, I should have received the blow intended to crush me in a new and strange position, amongst men who knew nothing of me, and where its severity would have been greatly intensified.

On the morning of the 10th of August (the day the steamer was to have sailed), I saw in the morning edition of the "Tribune" the following copy of—

#### GENERAL ORDER, No. 96.

WAR DEPARTMENT, ADJUTANT-GENERAL'S OFFICE,  
WASHINGTON, Aug. 6, 1862.

11. Major R. Morris Copeland, assistant adjutant-general, United-States Vols., having violated an important trust committed to him while serving on

the staff of the general commanding the Department of the Shenandoah, is, by direction of the President, dismissed the service of the United States, to take effect Aug. 1, 1862.

By order of the Secretary of War.

E. D. TOWNSEND, *Assistant Adjutant-General*.

A thunderbolt from a cloudless sky could not have been more startling. I could not realize that it was intended for me; and, in wonder and dismay, read and reread the fatal words. That I might have committed indiscretions in my term of service, was possible; but that I had been guilty of any crime, was, I knew, untrue. My military experience offered me no parallel for this outrage. I was struck to the earth, disgraced as deeply as an officer could be, with an undefined charge of which I had never heard or received the slightest premonition; having done my duty to the utmost, been an active participant in one severe battle and five skirmishes, recommended by every officer worth considering, whom I knew, for promotion; and yet without trial, examination, or even notice, I was ruined.

I could not believe the evidence of my own eyes, and felt assured that some mistake had occurred, which would be corrected as soon as I could get to Washington, and see the charges which had been preferred against me. To be provided against any emergency, I procured letters of introduction from gentlemen in New York to prominent persons in Washington, and left the same night for the latter city. As soon as possible after arrival, I visited Mr. Welles, Secretary of the Navy, presented a letter of introduction, and briefly told him my story. He appointed eleven, A.M., for me to visit him, when he would introduce me to the President.

As soon as the War Department opened, I went to the Adjutant-General's office to seek there (which seemed to me the proper source of information) a statement of the charges upon which I had been dismissed. I saw Lieut.-Col. E. D. Townsend, and asked him to give me an official copy of the order, and to permit me to see the charges. He gave me the order, but said he could not permit me to see the charges without direct per-

mission of the Secretary of War ; who, he had no doubt, would consent.

I hastened to the secretary's office, and, Mr. Stanton being engaged, asked the desired permission of an under-secretary. He at first said, "Certainly, you may see them ;" and then withdrew his consent, in order to consult Mr. Stanton.

In a few moments he returned from Mr. Stanton's office, and, in a very curt manner, told me that I could not see the charges ; that Mr. Stanton said, if I wished to ascertain the charges, I must apply to Gen. Banks, who made them. I represented to the secretary that this was a very harsh and unjust treatment ; that I had nothing to do with Gen. Banks ; I had been condemned, unheard by the War Department ; the charges upon which their action was based were on file there ; and certainly, if I had been deservedly punished in accordance with the evidence on file, there could be no greater absurdity than to refer me elsewhere. But I could get no change of answer, and was compelled to leave unsatisfied. Up to this moment, I had no idea of what charges could have been made against me, and could recall nothing that hinted of the situation in which I found myself. The only sinister remark of Gen. Banks, which I could remember, might have been perfectly innocent as he made it.

On the 16th July, Gen. Banks was sitting in my tent, talking of general matters, when I asked him, "To what duty do you think I shall be assigned with Gen. Hunter ?" He hesitated a moment, and then said, "You will know soon enough."

Unsuccessful at the War Department, I hastened to keep my appointment with Mr. Welles. I did not doubt that the President of the United States would listen to the wrongs of a citizen and soldier, and would at least permit me to know why I was discharged. Accordingly, I went to the office of the Secretary of the Navy, as he had appointed, at eleven, A.M. Mr. Welles accompanied me to the President's office, and introduced me, saying, "Mr. Lincoln, I wish to introduce to you Major Cope-land, an officer who seems to have suffered a great injustice : he is a friend to our best friends, who especially request of you to

give him a hearing and justice ; and he deserves, for their sake, to receive proper attention." Secretary Welles then left the room.

As composedly as possible, I read to Mr. Lincoln the official order of my discharge, and then said, "I have come to you, sir, as President of the United States, and Commander of the Army, to ask for simple justice as a citizen and soldier. I entered the first of the three-years' regiments, the Second Mass. Volunteers, and served as its quarter-master. I have been several times promoted ; have been seven times engaged with the enemy ; have been twice honorably mentioned ; and have now, in my pocket, letters recommending me in the strongest manner for the command of a cavalry regiment, from two major-generals, three brigadier-generals, four colonels, and several citizens. No complaint, that I know of, has been made against me ; and yet I am dismissed the service, with no more ceremony than one would kick out a dead dog. Will you allow this, sir ? will you allow the reputation I have made, my own and my children's property, to be destroyed in the dark ? Will you not consider my friends ?"

The President replied, "Well, sir, I know something about your case, and I'll tell you what I know. You're that man who went to Boston about the time Jackson broke through at Front Royal, and wrote letters and editorials abusing the Administration, and made speeches, and did all that you could to make a fuss."

I replied, "Sir, how have you become possessed of this erroneous idea ? I never did any thing of the kind."

"Well, I know all about it : I've been informed by good authority about you."

"Will you permit me, sir, to explain the truth ?"

"Yes."

"I came to Washington on the 20th of May, and, whilst here, was directed by Gen. Banks to apply to the Secretary of War for re-enforcements, as he was liable to be destroyed without them. I saw the secretary, and explained the urgency of the



case ; and told him, that, to the best of my belief, Banks, if not re-enforced within three days, would be cut off. He sneered at me, saying all generals were calling for troops, and that, during the day, three had telegraphed to him that Jackson was in front of them. I still urged the matter ; and at last he consented to send troops. I hastened to Boston, and, arriving on Saturday, heard on Saturday night that Kenly had been cut off at Front Royal, and knew, that, if such were the case, Banks must be in a critical condition. Monday morning brought the news of his disaster, and the secretary's call for troops. I went at once to Gov. Andrew, and asked him for the latest news. He gave it ; asked me my opinion of the condition of affairs ; and then asked me to write a letter, which would arouse the people of Massachusetts to enlist, by presenting the truth of the matter. Excited by apprehension of what had probably befallen our army, and the regiment in which I had several dearly loved friends, I sat down and wrote an appeal to the people of Massachusetts, and gave it to Gov. Andrew, who sent it, with a note, to the evening papers for publication. When I saw it in print, I for the first time realized the interpretation which might be put upon it by the Government ; but it was then too late. Following the letter, several editorials were written in Boston papers, severely attacking Mr. Stanton's war policy, which I have been told were sent to Mr. Stanton, as written at my instigation, but with which I had no connection, I having been, at that time, a warm defender of Mr. Stanton." I farther told him, that the editor of the offensive paper, who chanced to be my brother-in-law, would make affidavit to the fact ; and that I had always been warmly attached to the radical party, whilst the aforesaid editor was one of the strongest conservatives.

The President said, in reply, " Well, I did not know you were dismissed. I never saw the order, that I know of, until to-day ; though, of course, it has been laid before me, and received my official sanction ; and I don't know what the charges are. But I do know that you sent a most improper and malicious telegram, in cipher, to a Boston editor, which no officer had a right

to do, saying I was scared, M'Clellan was to be captured, and we were all going to ruin. You thought you were very sharp, and put it into some kind of a cipher you made up : but we've got some very cute fellows in the telegraph-office, and one of them worked it out, and sent it to me to read ; and I could see plainly enough that you belonged to that class of men who are trying to make all the mischief for the Government that they can. Fact is, I believe you want to help run this Government ; and, because you don't get as much notice as you think you deserve, you are trying to make trouble."

"Sir," said I, "will you permit me to explain the telegram ?" (which now for the first time came into my memory as a cause of complaint against me.) "When the news came to us in camp that M'Clellan had suffered his reverses before Richmond, we thought we saw how terrible a trial was before the country, and did not believe that the country realized it ; and it seemed to me, if I could awaken my conservative friends in Boston to the imminent danger, and the necessity of radical measures, that the Government would be grateful, rather than angry ; and I put the despatch into a cipher of my own, to blind the operators at either end. It was a cipher devised by me, and unknown to Mr. Dunbar : but I trusted to his acuteness to study it out ; and said, as near as I can recollect, 'Banks returned ; President alarmed, and uncertain what to do ; M'Clellan liable to capture ; urge putting strong man at head of war-affairs, and sending forward troops rapidly from West.' This may have been indiscreet and unmilitary ; but certainly the punishment is disproportioned to the offence."

"I do not say," said Mr. Lincoln, "that you are discharged for that, because I do not think you are ; but I do say, that you had no business to send it."

He then turned to some papers. I did not like to leave the matter thus, and again appealed to him to let me see the charges, as there might be some mistake which I could explain. Mr. Lincoln turned to me with an air of impatience, and said, —



“Gen. Stone and his friends have been trying for the last six months to get at his charges, and he can’t, and I don’t believe you will succeed much better. The fact is, I am inclined to believe that you are a mischief-making fellow, and good for but little as an officer, and capable of doing a great deal of harm; and therefore, the sooner you are out of the service, the better.”

I asked the President to look at the letters of recommendation I had from several generals, and other officers, which may be found in the Appendix; but he refused to do so. I asked him, as a final question, “If, then, nothing could be done?”

“Nothing,” he replied; “at any rate, at present.”

I immediately returned to Boston, and sought an interview with Gov. Andrew, to whom I told the story of the outrage under which I suffered. I appealed to him, as the Governor of the State, to see that a citizen of the State did not receive such treatment unquestioned.

He told me that he was powerless to help me, for that the officers of the army were entirely under the control of the general Government; and that his demands were but little considered at Washington, as the secretaries knew that he would do his duty at any rate, and therefore did not seek to conciliate him. He advised me to return to Washington, to see the Hon. Charles Sumner, and ask him for his aid. He wrote a letter to him, introducing me, stating his previous knowledge of me, and his utter disbelief that I should have been guilty of any violation of trust, but that it was possible, from over-zeal, I might have been indiscreet; and closed by urging him to do his utmost to see that the secretary became fully possessed of the facts in the case.

With this letter, and others, I returned to Washington; getting there Sunday noon. Mr. Sumner was out. I therefore left the letters for him, and called on him Monday morning at nine. I found him with some other gentlemen. I mentioned my name, and referred to the letters I had left. Without permitting me to enter into any statement of my affairs, so that I could possess him of the facts, and thus enable him to defend

me to the secretary, he said he had no time to listen to me then. "But," said I, "will you let me explain to you, that you may understand the merits of the case?" — "I am sorry; but I have no time." — "But, Mr. Sumner," said I, "let me briefly relate the principal facts." — "Sir," he replied, "I do not believe it is of any use. The Government is excessively prejudiced against you. The letter you wrote, and the editorials which followed, were utterly improper." I replied, "The editorials were none of mine, and any participation of mine in them is denied upon oath by their author; and, moreover, I was at that time a Stanton man, and more ready to defend than attack him." — "It's no use, sir, to delay me now. I saw all the publications, and took them myself to Mr. Stanton, calling his attention to them. The conduct of the 'Advertiser' to this Administration has been outrageous; yes, sir, treasonable; and it ought to have been suppressed." — "But, sir, I am not responsible for that paper; and, as is well known, my sentiments and theirs are almost entirely opposite." — "That may be all true, sir; but it is very unfortunate. You must see me this afternoon."

I wrote out a brief statement of my case, appending statement of Mr. Dunbar, which will be found in Appendix A, denying my having assisted his editorial efforts, and some other papers, and sent them to Mr. Sumner. I met him again in the afternoon at Willard's, and asked him to tell me if he had learned any thing. He stopped very reluctantly, and said, "I grieve, sir, to tell you what the secretary said. I saw him twice, and asked him about your affair; but, I am grieved to say, he would not listen to me." — "Did you tell him of my innocence of newspaper criticism?" — "No, sir: I did not consume his time. I asked him if the matter was closed. He said it was; and if re-opened, he should treat you worse than he had; that you had sent a telegram in cipher, which was enough to dismiss you from the service." — "Did you make any explanation of the telegram, the reasons for it, &c., as I had given them to you?" — "No, sir: I did not. I and the secretary have both too much to do to use time in explaining things which are

hopeless. The secretary does not object to your having criticised the action of the Government; but that a staff-officer should send the editor of a newspaper a telegram in cipher, is utterly inexcusable." — "Then, sir, you, a Massachusetts senator, refuse to insist upon a Massachusetts man getting the same justice you claim for a negro or a horse-thief?" — "Well, I can only say that I am very sorry for you; but it is useless. The secretary is very decided, and will listen to nothing." I returned to Boston, and told my misadventures again to the Governor, who said he would see Mr. Sumner upon his return, and try to do something. I here append Gov. Andrew's letter to Mr. Sumner, which plainly shows Gov. Andrew as desiring to have a fair inquiry into the facts: —

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS,  
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, BOSTON, Aug. 16, 1862.

HON. CHARLES SUMNER, Washington, D.C., U.S.S.

MY DEAR SENATOR, — Major R. Morris Copeland, who has been long serving on the staff of Major-Gen. Banks, having originally gone out as Quartermaster of our Second Massachusetts Regiment, appeals to me for aid in reaching a hearing, or at least an accusation; having been declared dismissed the service for an alleged violation of trust.

Mr. Copeland, son of Hon. B. F. Copeland of Roxbury, and always a resident of our community, a member of the religious society where I, too, belong, has always, since I remember him, borne a blameless reputation.

He is ardent, earnest, and impulsive; but, though more likely than cooler and more calculating men to make mistakes, I believe him incapable of intentional violation of any trust; and while I fully appreciate the importance of prompt, decisive measures with officers thus offending, I cannot help feeling a sting in my own heart, when a young man of his reputation is smitten by a blow which may ruin him, if friends do not stand by, simply because the allegation is so indefinite as to be open to the most terrible constructions.

I am sure that the Secretary of War will never permit an injustice to any man. He is one of the men in power in whose instincts, as well as judgment, we can rely; and, if I were in Washington, I would see him personally, confident that, *if he looked into the matter*, I should be satisfied with his conclusions.

Now, I pray you to call upon Mr. Stanton, introduce Major Copeland as one of our constituents to whom we are bound by official duties, and gain for him an opportunity to state his case; and I beg you to report to me by letter.

I am ever faithfully yours, &c.,

JOHN A. ANDREW.

After Mr. Sumner's return, the Governor brought my case to his notice ; and, after consulting with him, re-applied to the War Department in my behalf. On the 28th of August, I received the following letter from his Military Secretary : —

R. M. COPELAND, Esq.

BOSTON, Aug. 28, 1862.

DEAR SIR, — Day before yesterday, the Governor telegraphed to the War Department on the subject of your appointment to be a field-officer of a Massachusetts volunteer regiment; the existing orders prohibiting the muster of any appointees who have left the service, unless by special permission from the department.

The reply received from the Secretary of War was, that, if the Governor should appoint you, it would be regarded by the Administration as a gravely improper act, and that orders would immediately be given for your re-dismissal, and that such an appointment would be in violation of the standing regulations of the army.

The Governor has talked with Senator Sumner and with others concerning your affairs, and with a sincere desire to aid you if he can ; and after his conversation with those gentlemen, and from all the information he can gather, he thinks you ought to understand that the *only* thing which is impossible to get over with the War Department is your telegram to the "Advertiser" in cipher.

The fact that you did once send a cipher despatch to it causes the inference, that you had previously sent other despatches in the same manner, or had sent letters which co-operated in inducing the attacks made by the "Advertiser" so often during this year upon the Administration ; and it seems impossible to efface this belief from the minds of those who have control of your relations with the army.

In view of the explicit statements made, from the War Department, of the effect which your appointment would have, the Governor does not feel that he would be justified in making it, only to be immediately rejected, as the Secretary of War states that it would be. Such a rejection might injure the Massachusetts service more than it would be justifiable for the Governor to provoke.

In view of these facts, he suggests to you that the officers of the militia regiments to be raised here, are, under the Constitution of the State, elective ; and that, if you should be elected as an officer in any one of them, the question, whether he should issue a commission in conformity with the election, would present a different case from that now existing with regard to the expediency of a volunteer appointment.

Yours very truly,

A. G. BROWN  Military Secretary.



This letter showed me that the Governor was truly desirous of doing all in his power to aid me ; but I feared that adopting the expedient proposed might only involve others in my disasters.

The Secretary of War had given his word to hunt me down ; and although, as a Massachusetts officer, I should not be under his control until I should leave the State, I should then be subject to him, and he could discharge me, which would perhaps cause trouble in the regiment. I therefore decided to take no steps in the matter, but rather submit to the personal sorrow.

On the 16th of September, in reply to an inquiry, I received further assurance of the Governor's good-will.

R. MORRIS COPELAND, Esq.

BOSTON, Sept. 16, 1862.

DEAR SIR, — The Governor directs me to say, that he would be glad to assist you to military occupation, if he should have the ability and opportunity.

If you will indicate any assistance that he can render to you, specifying it definitely, he will have pleasure in affording it.

Yours very truly,

A. G. BROWN, Jr., *Military Secretary.*

Let me again call the reader's attention to the determined private hostility exercised against me by the Administration.

1st, After all the negations and equivocations at Washington, the Governor is decidedly told, that my only real offence is the telegram. If it were so, if the secretary had not been previously determined, as we have seen, to overthrow me, he would, even if reluctantly, have permitted me first to ascertain if the offensive despatch had been correctly translated, and not destroy me on a possible blunder of an ignorant person.

2d, If my supposed complicity with Mr. Dunbar and the "Advertiser" had induced the belief that I had combined with Mr. Dunbar in a secret manner thus to send by cipher valuable and forbidden information, I should have been permitted to produce Mr. Dunbar's statement, which directly stated that I had never sent him unauthorized information of any kind, either by telegram or letter ; and that he was, and still is, utterly ignorant of the cipher in which the despatch was enclosed.



3d, To return to the order by which I am discharged. There is an important error in it, which serves to refute all later statements of the cause of my discharge, and to cover Mr. Stanton's entire statements with a garment of duplicity. I am discharged for violating an important trust whilst serving on the staff of the commander of the Department of the Shenandoah.

That department had been abolished, and incorporated in the Department of Virginia, under command of Major-Gen. Pope, two weeks before I sent the telegram.

My friends determined to make yet another effort in my favor. During the winter of 1862 and 1863, when the subject of organizing a negro force was being favorably considered at Washington, Gov. Andrew and others renewed their applications at Washington, that I should be restored to the service, that I might aid in raising and disciplining the colored troops. Application was made direct to the President by the Hon. Charles Sumner, who says as follows, in a letter which I shall have other occasion to quote : —

“ Some time ago, I presented it (case of Major Copeland) to him on the application of Gov. Andrew, and so far interested him, that, for a while, I thought the case would be at least reconsidered ; but a private note from him, which I forwarded to Gov. Andrew, showed that he felt himself bound to leave it as it was.”

There seemed now but two methods which might give me redress, both of which were unsuccessfully tried. The two following petitions were prepared, and sent to Washington : —

TO ABRAHAM LINCOLN, President of the United States.

The undersigned, friends and fellow-citizens of R. Morris Copeland, late Major of United-States Volunteers, respectfully represent, —

That he was one of the first officers in the earliest raised three-years' regiments in Massachusetts ; that his reputation as a gentleman, and man of honor, has always been stainless ; that, in the field, he soon won so high a reputation for gallantry and efficiency, that he was quickly promoted to the rank of major, and thrice recommended by his superior officers for the command of a regiment ; that his public and private character was without spot, until, in August last, he was summarily dismissed the service “ for breach of an important trust.”

Summary dismissal without trial, and without knowledge of charges having been preferred against him, upon a charge so utterly inconsistent with his whole life, his widely known devotion to the war, and his zealous patriotism, is a sentence too severe to remain unexplained in his case.

As one of the earliest and most active of our citizens, and one whose efforts have been unremitted in his country's service from the very beginning of the war, his unexplained dismissal injuriously affects the public interests here, and weakens the supporters of the Government.

He may have been indiscreet or injudicious ; but his fellow-citizens know him too well to believe him guilty of dishonorable conduct, until he is proved so.

Believing, therefore, that the order of Aug. 6, 1862, dismissing him from the service, was based upon some misconception of his character or conduct, and confident, also, that the public interests in this quarter, as well as private justice to him, alike demand it, we respectfully pray that his sentence may be revoked ; and that, at the earliest possible day, R. Morris Copeland may be tried by a court-martial.

R. WALDO EMERSON.	JARED SPARKS.
J. M. FORBES.	J. R. LOWELL.
JAS. SAVAGE.	HENRY W. LONGFELLOW.
WILLIAM B. ROGERS.	JOSIAH QUINCY, Jun.
THOMAS HILL.	WILLIAM I. BOWDITCH.
JAS. WALKER.	HENRY LEE, Jun.
JAS. FREEMAN CLARKE.	CHARLES HALE.
AMOS TUCK.	HENRY I. BOWDITCH.
EZRA LINCOLN.	G. S. HILLARD.
J. G. GOODRICH.	SAML. G. HOWE.
LS. AGASSIZ.	

To the Hon. CHARLES SUMNER, Senator from Massachusetts.

DEAR SIR, — We beg you to present and strongly urge the enclosed petition, asking a trial by court-martial for R. Morris Copeland, late Major of United-States Volunteers.

Major Copeland has been indiscreet ; but no one who knows him can believe him dishonest. His whole past history, both civil and military, has always marked him as a brave and loyal officer and honorable gentleman.

Conspicuous for his whole-hearted devotion to the prosecution of the war and the most vigorous measures of the Administration, he is, by this unexplained act of the President, branded for life with an infamous crime, without a chance to defend or explain his conduct. Such severe punishment for an over-zealous and injudicious act, done under circumstances of intense public excitement, seems harshness to a man of his well-known probity and active loyalty, and gives weight to his prayer for the investigation of a court-martial.

Nor is this all, nor the most important aspect of his case. When a man, so widely known and regarded as he is, is thus summarily dealt with, it re-acts most unfavorably upon the public welfare. It weakens the Government, not merely among the public generally, but among its own friends and supporters, when one of its warmest and strongest is thus treated, without explanation, or power of reply.

If Major Copeland is guilty of the crime as charged, a fair trial will sustain the previous decision ; if he is innocent, it will strengthen the faith of the public in the justice of the administration which grants it. In either case, a fair trial by court-martial is expedient as an act of public policy, and simply just to an individual who is now widely considered as one of the earliest and most devoted champions of Freedom, — the victim of an arbitrary and hastily considered act.

We therefore respectfully request your aid in this matter, upon the double ground of private justice and public policy.

R. WALDO EMERSON.	JARED SPARKS.
J. M. FORBES.	J. R. LOWELL.
JAS. SAVAGE.	HENRY W. LONGFELLOW.
WILLIAM B. ROGERS.	JOSIAH QUINCY, JUN.
THOMAS HILL.	WILLIAM I. BOWDITCH.
JAS. WALKER.	HENRY LEE, JUN.
JAS. FREEMAN CLARKE.	CHARLES HALE.
AMOS TUCK.	HENRY I. BOWDITCH.
EZRA LINCOLN.	G. S. HILLARD.
J. G. GOODRICH.	SAML. G. HOWE.
LS. AGASSIZ.	

On the 2d of April, 1863, the following letter, in reply to these petitions, was addressed to Mr. C. F. Dunbar by Hon. Charles Sumner : —

COPY OF LETTER FROM HON. CHARLES SUMNER.

To C. F. DUNBAR, Esq.

APRIL 1, 1863.

DEAR SIR, — I have again presented Major Copeland's case to the President, and have read to him the papers which you have forwarded to me, signed by many most estimable names.

Some time ago, I presented it to him, on the application of Gov. Andrew, and so far interested him, that, for a while, I thought the case would be at least reconsidered ; but a private note from him, which I forwarded to Gov. Andrew, showed that he thought himself bound to leave it as it was. If you will read that note, you will see that it is as positive as brief. At least three times I have presented the case to the Secretary of War ; and, each time, I found his judgment fixed.

On one of these occasions, he spoke with astonishment that Gov. Andrew could seek to occupy his attention with a case which was irreversibly decided,

and, as he insisted, on the only principles consistent with the welfare of the army.

I found the President to-day perfectly ready to hear what I had to say; but he repeated, what I think you will find in the note forwarded to Gov. Andrew, *that the case could not be opened without personal offence to Mr. Stanton*, who had judged the case under the act of Congress by which the Government was empowered to dismiss officers without court-martial.

The President remarked, that with an army like ours, now numbering near seven hundred thousand men, the number of persons guilty of offences was so great, that, if they could all claim a court-martial, "the country would be used up in court-martials;" that the case of Major Copeland was not peculiar in this respect; that, only to-day, a chaplain, suddenly dropped, had appeared to him for a court-martial; and that, with a precedent in the case of Major Copeland's case, such a court-martial must be granted the chaplain and to many others; that it was the object of the statute to supersede the necessity of courts in such cases, and thus to promote the discipline of the army, and to save time; and that, in such a case, the Secretary of War was a competent judge.

The President did not encourage me to leave the papers; and I now have them subject to your order.

From the beginning, *I have been personally satisfied that Major Copeland had fallen into a military indiscretion, which was not, in any just sense, "a breach of trust;"* and I have expressed this conviction to the President and Secretary.

I do not disguise, therefore, my disappointment at the result which I now report. I wish it were better.

Faithfully yours,

CHARLES SUMNER.

During the time that this petition was in preparation, I tried the last hope for redress. A commission had been appointed in Washington, of which Brig.-Gen. Ricketts was president, whose duty, as publicly announced, was to examine the cases of such officers as had been dismissed without a hearing, who desired to come before the commission.

After making suitable inquiries, I applied to the War Department, through the office of the adjutant-general, for permission to appear before the Board; and, as I had been directed by the Hon. William Whiting, sent my communication to Major Vincent, A.A.G.

After waiting about four weeks without answer, I wrote him again, and, at the same time, to Brig.-Gen. Ricketts, through

Gen. Crawford, a member of the commission. Major Vincent did not reply. Gen. Crawford answered as follows : —

HEADQUARTERS INVESTIGATING COMMISSION,  
WASHINGTON, March 23, 1863.

R. MORRIS COPELAND, late Assistant Adjutant-General.

DEAR SIR, — Your communication to Brig.-Gen. Ricketts has been submitted to the Military Commission.

No cognizance can be taken of any case not submitted by the War Department. We simply act upon those duly authorized.

Application is made to the adjutant-general by the officer desiring an investigation; and I know of no instance where this has been refused.

The Board will examine without delay into the merits of your case, if directed so to do by the authority of the War Department.

Your communication to Major Vincent will, no doubt, meet with prompt attention.

Very respectfully your obedient servant,

J. N. CRAWFORD,  
*Brigadier-General Military Commission.*

Contrary to Gen. Crawford's opinion, Major Vincent never has taken the slightest notice of either letter. After waiting a suitable time, I addressed Major Robert Williams, A.A.G., War Department, Washington, preferring my request through him to the War Department; but no answer has been vouchsafed me.

Having thus exhausted every resource, I am now, more than a year after my discharge, compelled, as the only hope for my reputation, to appeal to the verdict of those who may read this account.

The logical conclusion from all the evidence I can collect is, that I was dismissed because I clothed my thoughts in a language unfamiliar to the War Department; for the President told me that he did not think I could have been dismissed for the telegram, but on charges unknown to him, preferred by Gen. Banks. Gen. Banks has denied ever presenting any charges. Gov. Andrew has been informed that the telegram is the only serious charge against me; whilst Mr. Stanton has told Mr. Sumner that the criticism on the Administration was not objec-



tionable, but it was inexcusable that a staff-officer should use a cipher to convey his thoughts ; leaving the inference that it was the public cipher which I had violated. The President distinctly said it was a cipher of my own invention ; which will be at once obvious, if the despatch is examined.

The only conclusion is, then, as I have stated, that using an unknown tongue is my crime. This is preposterous, and carries us back to the only tenable ground, that the real offence is my letter of May 26, for which Mr. Stanton told Major Perkins and Gen. Banks he would give me cause to remember him all my life ; and as that letter unwittingly drew down upon him the offensive criticism of the press, who saw in his meddling the source of all our military misfortunes, he seized the opportunity to punish me, an eye-witness of the facts, whose evidence it might be well to discredit in advance, particularly as he could not reach the press to inflict his vengeance on them.

I have no written proof of the statements of either Gen. Banks or Major Perkins, as I did not deem it necessary at that time to ask for it ; and, now that it would be liable to be publicly used, neither would give it. But the strong and the logical conclusion from the confused statements of my military superiors is the best proof of the truth of those officers' statements.

If I am really and avowedly discharged for my letter of May, I am contented. I am sure that whoever reads it will see in it evidence of my deep earnestness in our country's cause, and will be very unwilling to blame me for it, or think it cause for punishment. If I am discharged for the telegram, I can only ask my countrymen, if, in their judgment, that simple statement of facts obviously true to every person at the time it was written, and which indicated the immediately succeeding policy of the Government, was cause for my punishment ? It may have been uncalled for, injudicious, or even a violation of military etiquette ; but it was, at the worst, only a blunder, involving no one's happiness or success, or the country's welfare, and far from warranting a charge of a violation of a trust. This careful record of

all the facts and evidence known to me fails to show anywhere any breach of trust, or violation of confidence ; and, as I read the story over, it seems incredible, and I pause to ask myself, Can this be true ? Can such an outrage be permitted in these United States ? Can a man be destroyed on suspicion, without even being told why he is thus summarily dealt with ?

I will not attempt to speculate farther, or assign possible reasons to account for this strange story, but will leave it where it is, confident that, if the veil were withdrawn, it would appear that I have no cause to blush for any acts of my military career ; and I will close by solemnly stating, in the presence of God and these witnesses, that I know that I have never done aught as a soldier which should subject me even to the suspicion of having violated any trust reposed in me. And all I ask, and will ever pray for, is an open trial, where I may confront my accusers.

R. MORRIS COPELAND.

## A P P E N D I X.

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### A.

DAILY ADVERTISER OFFICE, BOSTON, Aug. 16, 1862.

R. MORRIS COPELAND, Esq.

DEAR SIR,— Understanding that an impression may have been conveyed to your disadvantage, that you have at times given me information upon military movements obtained by you while with the army in an official capacity, to be used by me as an editor, and that you have otherwise influenced what may have been said in this paper respecting the conduct of the war, I desire to offer to you the following statement, to be used by you in whatever manner you may find for your advantage:—

I declare, upon my honor, that I have never received from you by letter, or by telegraphic despatch, or by any other means of communication, any information respecting army movements, beyond that incidentally given in letters written in good faith upon other subjects, except in the cases mentioned below. I have received from you numerous despatches by telegraph; but they, in all cases, related solely to your private business. I received occasional letters from you while you were in the army; but they were in all cases upon purely personal matters, except one or two written in the summer of 1861, while you were Quarter-master of the Second Massachusetts Regiment, which were printed by me; and one, enclosing a letter from Gen. Shields, as to the battle of Winchester. With these exceptions, your letters never, so far as I can recollect, conveyed any fact or hint respecting military affairs, which has been used by me, directly or indirectly, or by any one else, with my knowledge, in the columns of any newspaper. Nothing either written or influenced or advised by you, with the above exceptions, has appeared in this paper, or in any other, with my knowledge, since your appointment to the staff of Major-Gen. Banks, except the letter from Gen. Shields noted above, and the address written by you in Boston on the 26th of May last, which was published in other Boston papers before its appearance in this, and was written, as I

understood, at the request of Gov. Andrew; and as for the editorial article, reflecting upon the Secretary of War, which appeared, together with your address, in our issue of May 27, and which attracted some attention at the time, it was written by me, without your knowledge, and was based upon information not obtained either directly or indirectly from you, except such as may have been contained in your address above referred to, which had appeared in the evening papers before the article was written. Nor have I ever had any knowledge of the cipher you used to cover your despatch, which I have never yet seen.

I must add, that, from the time of your staff appointment, I have inferred that you felt the necessity of avoiding all suspicion of imparting military information to me, for my use as an editor,—the more so, as our relations to each other might easily seem to give color to such an impression; and I have accordingly, for my own part, been careful from the first to avoid soliciting you for such information, or in any way obtaining it from or through you. The result has been a much less frequent communication between us than was to be expected from our intimate friendship and near connection.

Very truly yours,

CHAS. F. DUNBAR.

HEADQUARTERS, DEPARTMENT OF THE SHENANDOAH,  
April 10, 1863.

To his Excellency Gov. HOLBROOK, Montpelier, Vt.

SIR,—The sad termination of Col. J. P. Holliday's connection with First Vermont Cavalry leaves that fine regiment without a colonel. Composed of the best material, and raised in my adopted State, I feel a great interest in it, and regret exceedingly that untoward circumstances have reduced its efficiency as a regiment.

I believe, should I be so fortunate as to be appointed its colonel, I could make the First Vermont Cavalry a satisfaction to yourself, a credit to the State, and a valuable acquisition to the army.

Hoping that the letters submitted to you, with this application of my own, may prove satisfactory, and may secure for me a position I should feel highly honored to fill, I remain

Yours very respectfully,

R. MORRIS COPELAND, *Asst. Adjt.-Gen. and Major Vols.*

To His Excellency Gov. HOLBROOK, of Vermont.

SIR,—The undersigned, field, staff, and line officers of the First Regiment Vermont Cavalry, whilst we deeply deplore the loss of our late colonel, J. P. Holliday, beg leave to recommend to you, for the vacant commission, Major R. Morris Copeland, from Boston, Mass., a resident of Castleton, Vt., now assistant adjutant-general on the staff of Gen. N. P. Banks.

We have reason to believe that the experience he has acquired in this region and service, since the commencement of the war, eminently fit him to promote the efficiency of the regiment, and make it worthy of the State of Vermont.

JOHN D. BARTLETT, Major.  
S. G. PERKINS, Capt. Co. H.  
WM. WELLS, Capt. Co. C.  
ADDISON W. PRESTON, Capt. Co. D.  
E. B. SAWYER, Capt. Co. I.  
F. MOORE, Capt. Co. K.  
H. C. FLINT, First Lieut. Co. I.  
JOSIAH GRANT, Jun., Second Lieut. Co. I.  
GEORGE S. GALE, Surgeon.  
J. H. WOODWARD, Chaplain.

HEADQUARTERS, FIFTH CORPS D'ARMEE,  
WOODSTOCK, VA., April 9, 1862.

GOVERNOR, — I have just learned that the name of Major R. Morris Copeland has been mentioned, and is to be brought to your notice, in connection with the colonelcy of the First Regiment Vermont Cavalry, now vacant. It gives me very great pleasure to bear testimony to Major Copeland's ability and efficiency as an officer, of which I have had ample opportunities to judge; his position on the staff of Gen. Banks having placed me for months in almost hourly official contact with him.

Should he be appointed, you may be assured that he will bring to the command an energy both mental and physical, and a judgment natural and schooled in the necessities of the service, for the wants of almost every branch of which it has been his duty to foresee and provide.

I have no hesitation in earnestly *urging* his appointment; confidently expressing the belief, that, if designated for the command, he will reflect credit upon your own judgment in the selection, and honor upon the noble State that commissioned the regiment for the field.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

T. F. BRODHEAD,

*Colonel, and Chief of Cavalry, 5th Corps, Army of Potomac.*

To his Excellency the Governor of Vermont.

HEADQUARTERS 1ST DIVISION, 5TH CORPS, ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,  
CAMP NEAR WOODSTOCK, VA., April 9, 1862.

To his Excellency the Governor of the State of Vermont.

SIR, — Understanding that the friends of Major R. Morris Copeland, Assistant Adjutant-General of this army-corps, are about to make an application to your Excellency for his appointment to the colonelcy of the First Vermont Cavalry (made vacant by the recent death of Col. Holliday), I take the liberty to state, that I consider Major Copeland exceedingly well qualified for a cavalry commander.



He has all the energy, industry, zeal, and spirit that such a corps especially needs in a commanding officer.

His appointment would be gratifying to his fellow-officers, and, I think, a great benefit to the regiment.

I have the honor to be, with much respect, your obedient servant,

A. S. WILLIAMS,

*Brigadier-General Commanding Division.*

HEADQUARTERS FIRST DIVISION, FIFTH CORPS,  
NEAR EDINBURGH, VA., April 9, 1862.

We the undersigned, members of the staff of the First Division, Fifth Army Corps, do most cordially concur in the within recommendation.

THOS. ANTISELL, *Brigade Surgeon and Medical Director.*

WM. D. WILKINS, *Captain, and Assistant Adjutant-General.*

EDGAR C. BEEMAN, *Captain, and A.C.S.*

SAML. E. PITTMAN, *Lieutenant, and A.D.C.*

HENRY M. WHITTLESEY, *Captain, and A.Q.M.*

STRASBURG, VA., April 9, 1862.

His Excellency FREDERICK HOLBROOK, Governor of Vermont, Burlington, Vt.

I beg leave to earnestly recommend Major R. Morris Copeland, Assistant Adjutant-General of this corps d'armée, for the place made vacant by the untimely death of Col. Holliday. The First Vermont Cavalry has fine material, but needs a man of discretion, energy, and activity to fit them for the field.

Major Copeland has these qualifications; and, besides, he is intimately acquainted with this command and its wants, and, in my opinion, will do much to make that fine but neglected regiment a benefit to the service, and an honor to the State.

I have the honor to be your obedient servant,

JAS. SHIELDS, *Brigadier-General.*

HEADQUARTERS, DEPARTMENT SHENANDOAH,  
WOODSTOCK, VA., April 9, 1862.

To his Excellency Gov. HOLBROOK, Vermont.

SIR, — It is not my province, I know quite well, to interfere with your Excellency's appointments to office; but I cannot conscientiously refuse to state, in the way of commendation, the qualities of my associates in arms, when called upon to do so.

Major R. Morris Copeland, my Assistant Adjutant-General, is solicited by some of the officers of the First Vermont Cavalry, now without a commander by the sad death of Col. Holliday, to allow his name to be presented to you for that commission.

Permit me to say that Major Copeland is a most energetic and valuable officer; and that, in command of this cavalry, he will, in my opinion, render the regiment, and the State it represents, important services.

He has many rare qualities for the position; and I commend the application in his favor to your favorable consideration.

In character and qualifications, I think I may say he is in every respect fitted for this important position.

Very respectfully, I am your Excellency's most obedient servant,

N. P. BANKS, *M.G. Commanding.*

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS, EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT,  
BOSTON, April 10, 1862.

To his Excellency Gov. HOLBROOK, Vermont.

SIR,—I beg to say that Major R. Morris Copeland, now Assistant Adjutant-General, serving on the staff of Major-Gen. Banks, has been in the volunteer service from a very early day in the war; that he went from Boston as Quartermaster of our Second Massachusetts Regiment, maintained an eminent rank as such officer, and has always been spoken of throughout our whole body of Massachusetts officers as of the highest merit.

His character at home, his education, and the testimonials he has from his military superiors, all give him claim to the respect and confidence of us all.

I learn that he is a candidate for a cavalry colonelcy in a Vermont regiment; and, while I should not deem it decorous in myself to recommend the governor of another State to select a citizen of Massachusetts for an appointment, I am led to the liberty of this testimony, lest its absence might possibly and untruly imply some want of cordial respect on my part for Major Copeland.

I am, with great respect, yours faithfully,

JOHN A. ANDREW.

## B.

BALTIMORE, June 12, 1862.

MY DEAR MAJOR,—I received your telegram, and this evening your favor of June 9, in reference to the colonelcy of the First Maryland Cavalry. I had a conversation with Gov. Bradford of my State upon this subject; and he informed me that he had finally determined to tender the appointment to an officer of the army (regular), a Marylander, now in front of Richmond. . . .

Entertaining a high opinion of your courage and military capacity, it will always give me pleasure to serve you. . . .

I am very truly yours,

JOHN R. KENLY,

*Col. 1st Md. Vols., now Brig.-Gen. Commanding.*

On the 26th of June, the cavalry command being still unsettled, I was recommended by officers of rank to re-apply. Col. C. H. Tompkins, United-States Army, commanding First Vermont Cavalry, telegraphed as follows : —

MIDDLETOWN, VA., June 26, 1862.

Hon. HENRY GOLDSBOROUGH, President State Senate, Frederick, Md.

Will you do me the favor to call on Gen. Shriver, and see him relative to the appointment of Major R. M. Copeland to First Maryland Cavalry as its colonel? He is a highly accomplished officer, and perfectly competent.

Yours,

C. H. TOMPKINS, *U. S. Army.*

MIDDLETOWN, VA., June 26, 1862.

Gen. EDWARD SHRIVER, Frederick, Md.

You will oblige me and secure a valuable officer by supporting Major Copeland. The regiment needs an energetic officer; and I consider Major Copeland most particularly fitted for a cavalry command. Letter by mail.

Yours,

C. H. TOMPKINS, *U. S. Army.*

HEADQUARTERS CAVALRY, DEPARTMENT SHENANDOAH,  
June 26, 1862.

To his Excellency the Governor of Maryland.

SIR, — Understanding that it is not your intention to re-appoint Col. Miller to the First Maryland Cavalry, I take great pleasure in recommending to that important position Major R. Morris Copeland, U.S.A., an active, energetic, and accomplished officer, who would, I am satisfied, do credit to the position, if appointed.

Very respectfully your obedient servant,

JNO. P. HATCH,

*Brigadier-General Commanding Cavalry.*

HEADQUARTERS, MIDDLETOWN, VA., June 26, 1862.

To his Excellency Gov. BRADFORD.

I cordially concur in Gen. Hatch's recommendation, and beg that the missing recommendations of Gens. Banks, Williams, and Shields, may be considered as present in support of Major Copeland's merits.

JAMES COOPER,

*Brigadier-General Commanding.*

# LETTERS FROM OFFICERS SERVING WITH ME ON THE STAFF OF GEN. BANKS.

CAMP OF SECOND CORPS, ARMY OF VIRGINIA,  
NEAR WARRENTON, VA., July 17, 1862.

Brig.-Gen. RUFUS SAXTON, U. S. Volunteers.

MY DEAR SIR, — This will be handed you by a friend of mine, Major R. M. Copeland, Assistant Adjutant-General, formerly belonging to this corps, but now transferred to the army of Gen. Hunter.

Any favor you may find it in your power to show him, I shall consider as personal to myself.

After once knowing him, you will desire to continue the acquaintance, for his fine qualities both as a gentleman and an officer. His heart is earnestly in our great cause; and you can rely upon him for sympathy and assistance in any thing which forwards its interests.

With best wishes for your success, I remain, as ever, truly your friend,

S. B. HOLOBIRD,

*Col. U.S.A., and A.Q.M. to 2d Army Corps.*

MY DEAR SAXTON, — I heartily concur in the foregoing note of Holobird's.

D. D. PERKINS, *U.S.A., Major, and Chief of Staff to  
Major-Gen. Banks, Second Corps, Army of Virginia.*

WASHINGTON, July 18, 1862.

GENERAL, — This will be handed to you by my friend Major R. M. Copeland, Assistant Adjutant-General, with whom I have been intimately associated on the staff of Major-Gen. Banks for nearly twelve months. His heart is fully in this work in which we are engaged. He is thoroughly in earnest, full of power and energy. For such a man and officer, I need not ask, even out of any consideration for myself, your kind consideration: he will merit it.

I am very respectfully and truly yours,

E. G. BECKWITH,

*Colonel U.S.A., and A.C.S.*

To Major-Gen. HUNTER.

I am aware that these testimonials, in the presence of a positive charge, are only of a negative value, and are entirely outweighed by any direct evidence of my unworthiness; but when it is understood, that, to this day, no such positive charge has been made, they are of value as showing the probability of my having deserved the censure which I have received.

HEADQUARTERS, BANKS'S ARMY CORPS,  
NEAR MIDDLETOWN, July 4, 1862.

DEAR SAXTON, — Major Copeland, the present Assistant Adjutant-General of Gen. Banks, may hand you this letter. He will come in an official capacity, and will bring to his work capacity and earnestness.

You will be able to give him aid and comfort; and I shall be glad if you find it consistent with your position and duties to promote Major Copeland's wishes. . . .

Your friend, with great respect and regard,

WILDER DWIGHT,  
*Major Second Mass. Volunteers.*

To Brig.-Gen. R. SAXTON, U.S.V., Port Royal, S.C.